



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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One of summer's foremost seafood treats, the swordfish, will come on the market this month and will be available, in fresh form, until cold weather, according to Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes.

The swordfish has long appealed to epicures not only for its rich flavor, but because fine boneless steaks can be cut from the large fish. Ordinarily the price is high at the beginning of the season but tends to fall until it reaches its low point in August when larger quantities are available.

The swordfish, along with tuna and the sharks, vies for the title of biggest fish. Those caught in New England waters average nearly 300 pounds in weight. Once a thousand pounder was received at the Boston Fish Pier.

Because of the unique lance-like weapon of the swordfish, and also due to the fact that the species is widely distributed over the world and was well known to the ancient peoples of the Mediterranean area, many stories have risen concerning the swordfish's prowess. Many of these were doubtless based on fact, since there are genuine records of the swordfish driving his sword through both sides of small boats. This is possible due to the tremendous speed of attack of which these fish are capable.

When found by fishermen off the New England coast, however, the swordfish is normally lying on the surface digesting his dinner and at such time it may be easily approached and harpooned.

The swordfish is also valuable for its liver which contains an astonishingly high content of vitamin A. Chemists of the Fish and Wildlife Service have found the swordfish liver oil to be "100 times more potent in vitamin A than the U.S.P. (United States Pharmacopoeia) reference sample of cod-liver oil...and 500 times more potent than the minimum U.S.P. requirement for cod-liver oil." Weight for weight, this gives swordfish liver oil about 25,000 times the vitamin A potency of butter or eggs. It also contains a high content of vitamin D.

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Not much is known of the habits of the swordfish, but apparently it comes to U. S. waters only at the adult stage, the smallest specimen recorded in New England having weighed over seven pounds. It is believed to spawn in the eastern Atlantic, possibly in the Canaries Current off the West Coast of Africa.

The catch of swordfish on the Atlantic coast averages about two million pounds a year, while the smaller Pacific coast catch runs to about half a million pounds. The fishing season off California extends from June to November, with the peak catches being made in August and September.